

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Prepared Place

By Edward O. Bragwell

In John 14:2, Jesus said, *“In my Father’s house there are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you,”* in the King James Version and a few others. Some of the later translations render it rooms or dwelling places instead of mansions. According to Strong it is from the Greek word *Mone* which means, “a staying, i.e. residence (the act or the place): — abode, mansion.”

Whether it is mansions, rooms, or shacks, for that matter, is of little consequence to me. What really matters is that it is a place prepared for me. It is a place where I will be with God for eternity without any of the evil that goes with this world and with all the good that God has in store for me in heaven – which is far greater than all the good that we have in this life.

Some of the older brothers used to close their prayers with *“And Lord when this life is over, give us a home in heaven, and that will be enough.”* When I would hear that, I usually would think: “Isn’t that the truth.”

Most of that which we know about heaven is given to us in figurative language. We are told *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”* (1 John 3:2 NKJV) If we don’t know what we will be like, how can we know what God, heaven and all the heavenly host will literally be like? We can be content with a knowledge of what it will be kind of like from reading the figurative descriptions of it and wait to see what it is really like when we are privileged to enter into that glorious abode. Enough is revealed to whet our appetites for it.

When men begin to speculate about the things of heaven, identifying them with the same literacy as things in this material universe, they reveal that they have a much greater imagination than knowledge of what the Bible reveals. Whether one thinks of it as a mansion, a room, or a dwelling place he needs to understand he is thinking of figurative descriptions rather than literal – of spiritual things and not material. The same is true of the “streets of gold” and other figures in the book of Revelation. We need to understand that we are only capable of understanding so much. God has given us as much as we are capable of understanding by His figurative descriptions of the place prepared. Once there, we will be capable of seeing Jesus as he is. Likewise, we should be able to see heaven as it is. – from *Ed’s Sermons and Things, September 5, 2016.*



Conquering Temptation

By Bob Dodson

How can we overcome temptation? We do not sin by being tempted—we sin when we yield to the temptation. God’s word provides some guidelines to help us.

Remember God’s word! Use God’s word as a weapon in your spiritual battles with Satan and temptation. *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Eph. 6:17). Each time Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, He replied, *“IT IS WRITTEN”* (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). David said he hid God’s word in his heart that he might not sin against Him (Psa. 119:11). In the midst of persecution, holding to God’s word sustains us (Psa. 119:153, 157, 176). When tempted to do wrong, reflect on the word and what it says regarding the matter. In order to be able to use the word effectively, we must know what it says.

Avoid temptation! Rather than seeing how close to sin we can get, without going over the proverbial line, we need to

run in the opposite direction. ***“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness”*** (1 Tim. 6:11). ***“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”*** (2 Tim. 2:22). Joseph ran from the temptation Potiphar’s wife placed before him (Gen. 39:12). We are obligated to ***“watch”*** where we are going (Matt. 26:41). The writer of Proverbs warned the young man not to go near the harlot’s door (Prov. 5:8; 7:25).

Staying clear means not placing ourselves in situations where we will be tempted to violate God’s will. Many times, we sin because we position ourselves to provide opportunities for Satan to tempt us. If you play in Satan’s backyard, according to his rules, you will lose every time.

Pray! Jesus taught His disciples to pray that they would not be led into temptation. ***“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...”*** (Matt. 6:13). We should pray for strength to overcome life’s trials. Again, Jesus told His disciples, who were sometimes weak, ***“pray that ye enter not into temptation”*** (Matt. 26:41). It is interesting that in the context where Paul discussed putting on the whole armor of God to fight against the wiles of the devil, he added: ***“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”*** (Eph. 6:18).

Make an honest self-examination! We must consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted. ***“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted... But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load”*** (Gal. 6:1, 4). We must constantly examine where we are, and where we are heading. Am I walking in the paths of God or of the world? ***“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified”*** (2 Cor. 13:5). Do I flee temptation, or run right in its face? Could I be guilty of creating my own tempting situations? Each of us must be honest enough to examine our actions to see if we are taking the proper precautions, or blindly heading into danger by using human, rather than divine, wisdom. ***“Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”*** (2 Cor. 2:11). This takes self-discipline and the willingness to look at things as they really are—not how we wish to believe they are. Each of us must take personal examination seriously and perform it daily.

Understand how the tempter works! Any military leader can tell you that knowing how your enemy operates helps with your effort to defeat him. Satan has three avenues through which he appeals to us. ***“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”*** (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Satan attacks us at what he knows to be our weakest points. Don’t underestimate this adversary! He is sly, cunning, crafty, and has in mind only one goal—to destroy our souls.

Choose your companions wisely! Obviously, our friends have a great deal of influence—either good or bad—on us. Godly, moral companions are a good influence because they encourage us to do good things. On the other hand, evil and ungodly friends are a bad influence, because they seek to lead us away from God. In the Scriptures, Paul gave a stern warning about this very truth. ***“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame”*** (1 Cor. 15:33, 34). None of us is so strong that associating with sin cannot affect us. Many young people are lost to the world simply because they got with the wrong crowd. Influence is a powerful force, when it is used for good. The reverse is also true.

Remember sin’s consequences! It seems that Joseph was thinking about this very fact when he resisted sin in his life. ***“But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*** (Gen. 39:8, 9). Sadly, many learn too late that the pleasures of sin last only for a season—they do not endure. ***“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin”*** (Heb. 11:25). Sin’s wages never change. ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*** (Rom. 6:23). If we die in sin, we’ve earned eternal separation from God (Rev. 21:8). Is it worth the risk?

Look for a way of escape! Temptation is like being in a room that has more than one door—there is a way to escape. God has promised a means of escape for every temptation known to man. ***“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”*** (1 Cor. 10:13). Sometimes we ignore the escape route and yield to the temptation. Sometimes the way to escape is by not putting yourself in a susceptible position. Look for the way to do the right thing—then do it!

